

# The Montclair Pod Editorial & AI Policy

## Our Mission

The Montclair Pod is an independent, community-centered newsroom and storytelling platform focused on high-quality, hyperlocal reporting about Montclair, NJ. Our mission is to inform, empower, and connect our community through thoughtful journalism, rigorous fact-finding, and stories that reflect the people, challenges, and possibilities of our town.

A stronger Montclair begins with stronger information.

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## Editorial Independence

We maintain full and uncompromising editorial independence.

- We **do not** accept cash, gifts, discounts, favors, or special access in exchange for coverage.
- We **do not** publish “pay-to-play” stories.
- We **do not** allow sponsors, advertisers, public officials, or partners to influence our reporting, interviews, or editorial decisions.
- Sponsorship agreements exist **outside** our editorial process. Sponsors support the work, **not** the coverage.

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## Accuracy, Accountability & Corrections

We are committed to accuracy, clarity, and context — especially on complex topics such as school finance, public safety, politics, and small business economics.

To uphold this:

- We verify information with **multiple credible sources** whenever possible.

- We cite public documents and data when available.
- We clearly label opinion or analysis.
- We update stories when new information emerges.
- We correct errors openly and promptly. Corrections may appear in article footers, show notes, social updates, or on-air when necessary.

If you believe we've made an error, please contact us at [hello@themontclairpod.com](mailto:hello@themontclairpod.com).

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## Community-Centered Coverage

We aim to represent the full spectrum of Montclair voices by prioritizing:

- local residents, parents, students, educators, business owners, and community leaders
- underrepresented and underserved groups
- transparency about what we know, what we don't, and what we are still investigating

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## Interview Standards

All interviews are conducted on the record unless explicitly agreed otherwise.

- Guests do **not** approve edits.
- Guests do **not** shape the questions or narrative.
- Sponsored segments (e.g., *Farnoosh & Mike Eat Food*) are clearly labeled.
- Financial relationships never influence tone, questions, or outcomes.

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## Sponsored Content & Advertising

Sponsorships help sustain our independent journalism, but they never guide editorial.

- Sponsored segments and ads are **clearly disclosed**.
- Sponsors do **not** influence coverage, booking, or editorial direction.
- Sponsored content never mimics reporting.
- If a sponsor provides data (e.g., real estate stats), we disclose the source.

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## Coverage of Local Businesses

When we feature restaurants, shops, or local services:

- Coverage is **not** exchanged for free meals, samples, or discounts.
- If something is ever provided free or discounted, we disclose it.
- In almost all cases, we feature places we visit independently and pay for ourselves.

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## Political Coverage

The Montclair Pod is strictly **nonpartisan**.

- We do not endorse candidates.
- We ask fair, challenging questions of all public officials and candidates.
- We fact-check policy claims when relevant.
- If officials request off-limits topics, we disclose that to our audience when appropriate.

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## Funding & Sustainability

Our work is supported by:

- local business sponsorships,
- grants (when available),
- events and live programming,
- listener support, and
- our own personal investment in building a local newsroom.

We do **not** receive funding from political campaigns or PACs.

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## AI Policy: How We Use Technology

At The Montclair Pod, all content begins and ends with humans.

Our editors, producers, and writers are responsible for the research, reporting, narrative structure, and final decisions behind every podcast and article.

We use AI tools **responsibly** and **transparently** to support — not replace — our human team.

### How AI May Assist Us

AI may be used for:

- initial research or background gathering
- early drafting or brainstorming
- transcription, summarization, or organization
- checking for possible factual inconsistencies
- generating alternate phrasing or format options

## What AI Does Not Do

- AI does **not** publish directly to our site or feed.
- AI does **not** make editorial decisions.
- AI does **not** write final drafts.
- AI does **not** replace interviews, reporting, or human judgment.

Every piece of content is **reviewed, edited, shaped, and approved by human journalists** to ensure accuracy, fairness, and Montclair-specific context.

If you ever spot something that seems inaccurate or incomplete, please contact us at [hello@themontclairpod.com](mailto:hello@themontclairpod.com).

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## Our Commitment

We pledge to remain:

- **curious, not cynical**
- **local, not insular**
- **independent, not influenced**
- **transparent, not opaque**
- **community-driven, not sponsor-driven**

Montclair deserves thoughtful, fact-based journalism rooted in integrity and built by humans who care deeply about this town. That is — and will remain — our standard.